



Above: Dale Farm after the evictions PHOTO: Elisabeth Blanchet Inset: Mr Egan and Candy Sheridan talk to the press

Dale Farm making history

The 10-year battle to stop the eviction of the unauthorised plots on Dale Farm in Essex entered a new phase on 20th October when residents and protestors ended the resistance to the police operation and walked out together through the barricades two days after riot police had stormed the site to clear the way for the bailiffs. *By Michael Doherty*

WITH MANY of the residents now looking for somewhere to call home and the supporters dispersed, Travellers' Times talked to Gypsy and Traveller rights campaigner Marc Willers and Gypsy Council representative Candy Sheridan about what Dale Farm means for the future.

"The Dale Farm campaign is making history," said Candy Sheridan. "What happened there – Travellers fighting for their homes and their right to be treated with dignity and humanity – has empowered the people involved. The McCarthy sisters especially captured the nation's heart with the way they dealt with the media and for what they said. It is wonderful to see Traveller women have their voices heard and listened to."

Candy Sheridan also explained how the legal fight has been misrepresented by the national and local papers and TV. "We have not 'lost' as many seem to claim," she said. "We

were awarded a third of our costs by the judge which is a first for a Traveller planning appeal. This will sharpen the minds of every council in England and they will think long and hard before taking this confrontational stance again."

Marc Willers, who acted as the legal representative for the Dale Farm residents for the recent appeals after Candy and Mary Sheridan won a dramatic last-minute injunction that postponed the eviction, explained that the legal battle is not over yet. "The particular court case that was lost at the High Court in early October was the last bite of the cherry for the site as a whole as far as the English legal system goes, but now we are planning to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights," he said.

"We will be basing our appeal on proportionality – or whether Basildon Council was right to use such drastic measures to enforce a green belt planning infringement. We

will argue that Basildon used a sledgehammer to crack a nut and that making the elderly and infirm as well as all those children homeless, the council acted disproportionately. We will also argue that Basildon Council should have offered another site rather than hostels or flats and houses as alternative accommodation to the residents," said Mr Willers.

Yet the legal fight is not over in English law either, as Candy Sheridan – who is on site every day amidst the bailiffs and council workmen, the noise and the machinery explained: "This happens to my community every month, every week, every day. The media have now gone but the fight continues. There are families living in the middle of all this. They have nowhere else to go. The court order allows for a small site to remain here and we will go through the courts to make sure that happens and that the residents can live here with dignity and in peace."

Meriden appeal thrown out

ERIC PICKLES, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, has undermined Warwickshire's Gypsy community by rejecting their appeal to stay on their own land at Eaves Green Lane in Meriden.

The planning inspector's decision against the Burton family was upheld by Mr Pickles,

who said that the Gypsies' private site "would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area".

Seeking planning permission retrospectively is currently legal in the United Kingdom, but this may change under the coalition's new planning guidance.

TT has a new editor

DAMIAN LE BAS has been appointed as Editor of Travellers' Times so make sure you shake his hand when you next see him.

Damian has been writing for TT, both the website and the magazine, for the past few years and is well known to most of you. Damian pipped a strong selection of Traveller applicants to the post.

